

ODA proposes Asian gypsy moth eradication project in Portland

January 6, 2016... The Oregon Department of Agriculture is proposing to treat Portland's Forest Park and a portion of north Portland this spring to eradicate an introduction of Asian gypsy moth, an invasive plant-eating insect pest. The proposed project involves a treatment area of approximately 8,674 acres following last year's detection of Asian gypsy moths in Forest Park and the St. Johns area. If approved, the spray projects would be scheduled to take place in late April and early-to-mid May.

The proposal is based on recommendations of an international technical working group of gypsy moth experts that included researchers with the US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Canada, the University of Washington, and the University of California at Riverside.

ODA is proposing three aerial applications of *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (B.t.k.), an organically approved product and natural-occurring bacterium that has been used safely and effectively in other gypsy moth eradication projects in Oregon since 1984.

ODA is preparing environmental reviews and is planning informational open houses to explain the Asian gypsy moth eradication proposal to area residents and interested individuals. Specific dates, times, and locations of the open houses will be announced later. Details about the proposed project, including maps showing gypsy moth detections and the proposed spray boundary, are available at <<http://go.usa.gov/c5e6P>>.

Meanwhile, ODA continues to consult with local, state, and federal agencies as well as conduct outreach activities with several groups and organizations in the proposed treatment area, including those who are actively connected with Forest Park. ODA's goal is to communicate closely with the appropriate parties and keep everyone informed.

A final decision on the eradication proposals will be made by the Director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture in the next several weeks.

ODA trapped 14 gypsy moths statewide last year, including the two Asian gypsy moth detections. The other 12 moths trapped are the more common European strain of the insect. Asian gypsy moth is potentially much more serious. Unlike its European cousin, the female Asian gypsy moth has the ability to fly, which could lead to a more rapid infestation and subsequent spread. The Asian gypsy moth also feeds on a wider range of plants and trees, including conifers. There have been just three Asian gypsy moths detected in Oregon prior to last year— single catches in North Portland in 1991, Portland's Forest Park in 2000, and St. Helens in 2006. It's notable that

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two of the three Asian gypsy moths trapped in Oregon were relatively in the same locations as the most recent detections. Additionally, an Asian gypsy moth has been trapped across the Columbia River near the Port of Vancouver in Washington.

The Asian gypsy moths caught in Portland and Vancouver can likely be traced to cargo arriving by ship from infested areas of Far East Russia. Inspectors with the Custom Border Protection (CBP) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) monitor, intercept, and destroy Asian gypsy moth egg masses when they are detected, but the chances of intercepting every potentially viable gypsy moth egg mass are challenging.

The current Asian gypsy moth detections represent an unprecedented threat to the Pacific Northwest's forestland ecosystem. Establishment of this pest would result in defoliation of forest canopy leading to increased stream water temperatures and sediment loads that will negatively impact habitat for native aquatics species. Establishment would result in increased pesticide use, based upon the need of private landowners to conduct ongoing treatments to mitigate damage to forestland. It would also increase production costs and loss of markets through quarantines on nursery, horticultural, and forest products, including Christmas tree production.

Early detection and eradication of gypsy moth infestations are goals of ODA to prevent economic and environmental losses to Oregon by restrictive quarantines on commodities, by loss of foliage and trees, or loss of favorable fish habitat due to expanding gypsy moth populations.

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